poisoned and, possibly moved by the hatred and jealousy of a slighted wife, she had his mother horribly mutilated and killed. Lu Hou's own son, the Emperor Hui Ti, proved dissipated and she was practically monarch during his reign. She married him to a granddaughter of hers, and, although the union is believed to have been childless, on his death she declared Emperor successively boys whom she said were its fruits. These children were, of course, mere puppets, and Lii Hou was the real ruler. The first of them was a son of Hui Ti by a concubine. When he showed too much independence she had him imprisoned. She appointed her own relatives to high office and apparently sought to supplant permanently the Liu family. On her death, however, the house of Liu asserted itself, exterminated her kin, and placed on the throne a son of Kao Tsu, known in history as Wen Ti.

Of Wen Ti and of the succeeding Emperor Ching Ti, his son, but little need here be said. Wen Ti was an exceptionally able ruler. He favored Confucianism. The surviving prohibitions of Ch'in were still further lightened, that against criticism of the government being entirely abolished. The Ch'in edict proscribing all but certain authorized books, it should be noted, had been rescinded while the Empress Lii was in power. Capital punishment was comparatively infrequent. Taxes were reduced. Under them the Empire was recuperating from the extreme exhaustion which characterized the earlier years of the Han. Members of the Liu family were again appointed to rule over the great divisions of the Empire, but their power was more and more curtailed. One of the steps taken against them—the

annexation to the central government of portions of their estates[1]—led to a concerted revolt of several of these dignitaries. Upon its suppression a further diminution of the importance of the *Wang* was effected by depriving them of some of their functions and establishing the principle that their domains should be partitioned among their children rather than passed intact to one heir.

APEX OF THE EARLIER HAN DYNASTY! THE REIGN OF WU TI

The Han dynasty reached its height under the Emperor who is best known to posterity by the title of Wu Ti (usually called Han Wu Ti to distinguish him from Wu Tis of other dynasties).

[1] The step was taken in part at the suggestion of some Legalists.